Trail guide

WET TROPICS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Bartle Frere summit western approach

Bellenden Ker National Park

Mt Bartle Frere, at 1622 metres, is the highest peak in Queensland. Set amid the rugged wilderness of the Bellenden Ker Range and the Russell River watershed, the summit offers the chance to view both the coastal lowlands and the Tablelands.

The region receives some of the highest rainfall in Australia with recordings of more than 10 metres annually. Rivers cascade through lush tropical rainforest which covers the landscape from foothill to summit.

The Bellenden Ker Range is home to several plants and animals found only in this region. A microhylid frog, *Cophixalus neglectus*, is found only on the Bellenden Ker Range above 900m while the Bartle Frere skink, *Bartleia jigurru*, is restricted to exposed granite boulders at high altitudes.

The summit can be approached from Atherton Tableland (western) side or from Josephine Falls (to the east). **This brochure describes the western approach, from the Tableland.** The one-way distance to the summit from either side is approximately 7.5km. From the summit, you can return to your starting point or continue to the other side (total length 15km). Although not extremely long, the trail is unformed and very steep in places. Rock scrambling is often necessary. Only the fittest of bushwalkers can cover this distance in one day (10-12 hours) so the hike is best undertaken over two days. Please note a camping permit is required and is available from self-registration stands at the trail ends.

Safety for hikers

Before you depart on this hike please ensure you:

- are a fit and experienced bushwalker,
- have the correct maps and a compass,
- have adequate food, water and clothing suitable for very cold and wet conditions,
- take a fuel stove as no fires are permitted, and
- have given details of your proposed trip to a responsible person.

Access — western approach

Follow Lake Eacham Road to Topaz Road. Proceed along Topaz Road past Butchers Creek and turn left on to a gravel road to Lamins Hill Lookout. Follow the signs on Gourka Road (7km). Please take care because this road can be slippery when wet. Conventional vehicles should be left at the end of Gourka Road at the national park boundary. The national park access track past this point is suitable only for four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Access — eastern approach

The turnoff to Josephine Falls is 43km south of Cairns and 2km south of Miriwinni on the Bruce Highway. The park entrance is 8km from the turnoff.

The trail — western approach

A signpost marks the start of the hiking trail, 2km along the access track. Please add this distance to the total if you intend walking to this point.

Orange triangles mark the hiking trail's route from the signpost to the summit. Please keep to the marked trail as it is easy to get lost in the dense rainforest.

Bobbin Bobbin Falls can be heard north of the trail about 2km from the start. The Falls are only 50m from the trail and offer hikers the chance to take a break and fill their waterbottles. The trail climbs sharply past the Falls.

On the long hike up the mountain, notice changes in the vegetation. Tall, large-leafed trees give way to a more stunted forest. Leaf size and tree trunk diameters decrease as altitude and exposure increase.

North West Peak, 5km from the start, marks the end of the steep hike. A short deviation to the south-west side of the trail reveals some small granite boulders. The view of the Tableland from the top of these is spectacular.

The trail continues for another kilometre along the ridge to a group of large rocks. The view to the north from the top of these rocks overlooks Bellenden Ker and the Mulgrave River Valley. This excellent view is not possible from the Bartle Frere summit.

After leaving the lookout, the trail descends across two creeks. The second crossing has a clearing suitable for camping. Water is available here all year round. The site is a welcome rest point before the climb to the summit some 750 metres away.

Bartle Frere skink

The trail leaves the campsite, crosses the small creek, and then becomes a rock scramble. The trail passes through and over numerous granite boulders. Please follow the orange markers as it is easy to make a wrong turn.

Mt Bartle Frere's summit is broad. The coast and Innisfail township can be seen from the highest point. A view across the Tableland can be obtained from a sedge-covered clearing to the west.

If continuing to Josephine Falls, water is available most of the year from a spring at the remains of an old mine site at Top Eastern Camp. As you descend, the open grassland and low scrub of the ridges is replaced with rainforest.

Caring for national parks

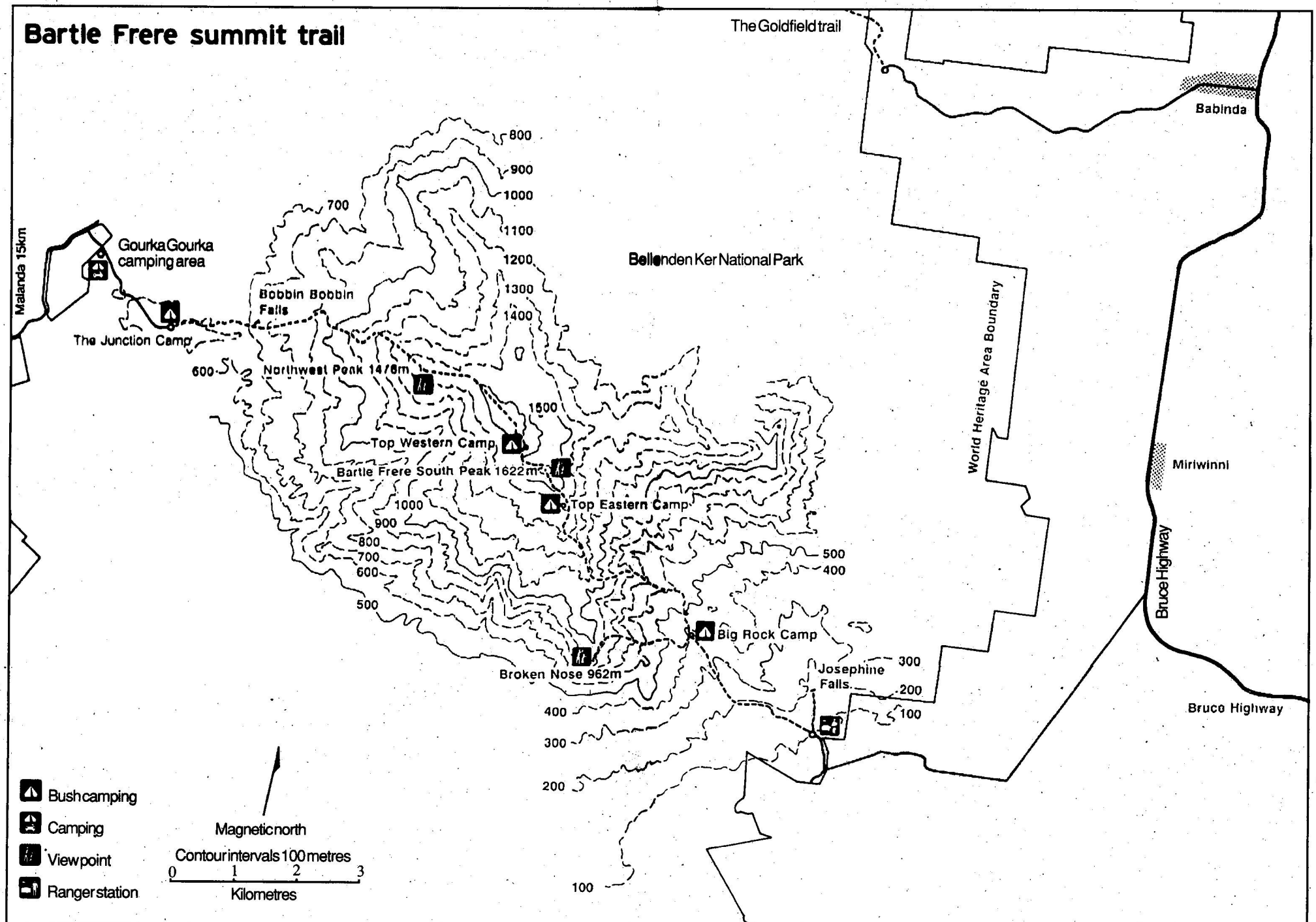
Regulations below are designed to help you care for Bellenden Ker and other national parks. Please follow them to ensure your enjoyment of the park's natural environment every time you visit.

- Leave pets outside the park. Their presence frightens native animals and most will instinctively hunt birds and other small animals.
- Leave flowers, ferns and other plant material, living or dead, undamaged. What is easy for you to pick may take years to replace.
- Leave the native animals alone; remember this is their home.
- Firearms are prohibited.
- When hiking in the park please carry out your rubbish.
- Obtain a camping permit and register your trip details with the Ranger at Josephine Falls before and after your hike.
- Human waste must be buried.
- Keep to the marked trail.

For further information

Ranger Station
Bellenden Ker National Park
Josephine Falls
PO Box 93
MIRIWINNI QLD 4871
(070) 67 6304

Bartle Frere summit trail



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